

**THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION
PRESS RELEASE**

For immediate release:

March 17, 2021

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**Montgomery Parks Celebrates “Shine Brighter Together,” Autism Awareness
& Acceptance Month**

WHEATON, MD – [Montgomery Parks](#), part of The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission, in coordination with agencies across the county, is celebrating [Autism Awareness and Acceptance Month](#). Throughout the month of April, county agencies will host engaging programs, activities and mini events as part of the month-long “shining brighter together” celebration. Agencies participating in the celebration include Montgomery Parks, Montgomery County Department of Recreation, City of Takoma Park Recreation, City of Rockville Recreation and Parks, City of Gaithersburg Parks, Recreation and Culture, ArtStream, and the Montgomery County Public Library System.

“It is so important to provide inclusive parks and programming to welcome individuals of all abilities. The “Shine Brighter Together” initiative features a variety of creative and family-friendly programs for all to participate and enjoy,” said Jennine Blakely, Inclusion and Community Outreach Specialist for Montgomery Parks.

Creative programs will focus on sharing positive, respectful, and accurate information about autism while informing the community about the variety of resources available in Montgomery County. Montgomery Parks is offering a Creative by Nature program at Black Hill Nature Center, and Sensory Sundays, at the Agricultural History Farm Park.

“Sensory Sundays is a fun event for youth and their families to experience hands-on learning, meet the animals at the farm, experience outdoor exhibits and explore tactile activities and crafts,” said Lisa Berray, Manager of Interpretation and Visitor Services for Montgomery Parks.

The full list of activities offered are available on the “[Shine Brighter Together](#)” event page. Families can choose to participate in up to 22 events throughout the month. Many of these family-friendly programs are virtual, however there are several opportunities for in-person engagement and learning.

Montgomery Parks welcomes individuals with all abilities to participate in programs and activities of their choice. The department’s [Program Access](#), also referred to as “Inclusion Services,” provides modifications, accommodations, support staff, sign language interpreters, auxiliary aids, and trainings to

promote awareness and sensitivity to enable and ensure an individual's successful participation and accessibility of programs and services throughout the County.

The Month at a Glance:

What: Shine Brighter Together: Autism Acceptance Month

When: April 1-April 30th, 2021

Where: Various locations throughout the county and virtual

Cost: Varies. Some programs require advanced registration. Please see specific program details.

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About The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission Montgomery Parks

Montgomery Parks manages more than 36,000 acres of parkland, consisting of 421 parks. Montgomery Parks is a department of The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC), a bi-county agency established in 1927 to steward public land. The M-NCPPC has been nationally recognized for its high-quality parks and recreation services and is regarded as a national model by other parks systems. www.montgomeryparks.org

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About the City of Rockville Recreation & Parks

Rockville is considered one of the nation's leading small cities. Rockville reveres its roots, its commitment to citizen-centric public service, to the environment and to the connection of neighborhoods and residents. Rockville is a 13-square-mile city that is home to more than 68,000 residents, located less than 15 miles northwest of Washington, D.C., and is frequently recognized as one of the best places to live in the nation.

Amy Vagnoni: avagnoni@rockvillemd.gov

PIO: Cliff Cumber 240-314-8116

About the City of Takoma Park Recreation

The City of Takoma Park's Recreation Department provides recreational opportunities for all ages! Our facilities and programs are intended to refresh and rejuvenate our residents, improve our health and connect us as families and as a community.

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PIO: Donna Wright, donnaw@takomaparkmd.gov

About the City of Gaithersburg Parks, Recreation and Culture

The Department of Parks, Recreation and Culture provides quality programs, facilities and parks to people of all ages and cultures and are designed to enhance quality of life and encourage a sense of pride in the community.

Ashlyn Thompson: Ashlyn.Thompson@gaithersburgmd.gov

PIO Britta Monaco Britta.Monaco@gaithersburgmd.gov 240-805-1126

About ArtStream

Through collaborative performance and lifelong learning opportunities, people with intellectual and developmental disabilities gain the skills and confidence to engage with the world.

Heller An Shapiro: h.shapiro@art-stream.org

About Montgomery County Department of Recreation

Since 1954, Montgomery County Recreation (MCR) has remained dedicated to providing inclusive quality recreation programs and activities that serve the recreation and leisure needs of the Montgomery

County community. The department manages 40 facilities including an administrative headquarters, community and neighborhood recreation centers, senior centers, and indoor and outdoor aquatic facilities and provides thousands of programs such as out-of-school activities, aquatics classes, youth and adult sports programs and leagues, senior programs, and therapeutic recreation that enhance the quality of life for participants of all ages, cultures and abilities. Montgomery County Recreation is nationally recognized for its excellence in the provision of facilities and programs.

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About Montgomery County Public Library System

Montgomery County Public Libraries offers free and equal access to services and resources that connect the people of Montgomery County to ideas and information which sustain and enrich their lives.

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PIO: